

OPPOSING CIRCLES AND HIGH FIVES

Walking against the flow of others creates balance challenges. The little bumps and jostles (perturbations) common in crowds can be frightening and the constant every-which-way flow of moving people can be dizzying for vestibular systems. The following progressive challenges are safe, fun ways to practice crowded walking situations. These two could easily be visual or vestibular. They are both normally fairly easy for most groups.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Helps build confidence for walking in crowds.
- ⦿ Incorporates visual targets.
- ⦿ Practices common vestibular challenges.
- ⦿ Promotes fun social interaction.

Set It Up »

You will need a large, safe area for several people. Clear the area of any obstacles or hazards. Plan the route your participants will use ahead of time.

How to Do It »

Explain the activity and let participants know that some of them may get a little dizzy. Explain that if they do, they should stop and sit down or let you know and you will help them. Participants who use walkers can use them during this activity.

Opposing Circles

- ⦿ Divide participants into two groups. Have them form an outer circle and an inner circle.
- ⦿ One circle of participants walks counter-clockwise while the other walks clockwise.
- ⦿ Observe all participants. Ask if anyone is uneasy or dizzy and look for signs that they may be.
- ⦿ If all is going well, have the class slow down and then change directions.
- ⦿ After a little while, switch inner and outer circles and go again.
- ⦿ Encourage participants to move the circles close enough to each other to occasionally bump shoulders with the inner circle. Just little bumps, though!
- ⦿ Ask them to pay attention to the visual sensations they get walking in opposite directions from others.



High Fives

Use the same double opposing circles, but this time, cue participants to stabilize their torso and give each other high fives as they pass.

- ⦿ Participants should be cautious at first and go easy on each other. Little bumps.
- ⦿ Here are some cues to use:
 - Your visual target is the other person's hand. Watch it until you high five it.
 - Spot your target. Watch the hand, hit it, and then go to the next hand.
- ⦿ Change circles and directions. Do it once more.



Give It More Balance »

Do allemande hands around the circle! This variation is an advanced challenge because of the weaving passes participants make as they allemande around the circles. The hands of the oncoming person become the next visual target. (See Allemande Left on page 311 for more details.)

Keep It Safe »

Take things slow. Vestibular dysfunction is common in older adults. Watch participants closely, especially at first, for signs of dizziness.

Live It »

Fitness can't fix vestibular dysfunction, but practicing problem moves will help participants predict and manage the challenges better. This practice will also help them walk in crowds and survive the little inevitable bumps that happen.